

Euclid to improve sewers

City must make extensive fixes in settlement with EPA

Max Reinhart

MReinhart@News-Herald.com

The city of Euclid has agreed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to make extensive improvements to its sewer system. The agreement follows the EPA's investigation into contamination of United States rivers, streams and lakes, including Lake Erie, by raw sewage and contaminated stormwater.

Euclid Mayor Bill Cervenik said the improvements are expected to cost the city between \$55 million and \$90 million over an estimated 15-year period.

"It boils down to our system is not as efficient as it should be," Cervenik said. "We have a responsibility as good stewards of the environment to comply the best we can with the EPA's standards. We certainly don't want to be putting raw sewage into Lake Erie."

According to the settlement, which was lodged Wednesday in federal court, the

city is required to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to reduce or eliminate:

- Untreated overflows of sanitary sewage and stormwater from its combined sewer system.

- Bypasses around fundamental treatment systems at the city wastewater treatment plant.

- Overflows of sanitary sewage from the city's separate sanitary sewer system.

According to a U.S. Department of Justice and EPA news release, the city's sewage and wastewater discharges flow directly into Lake Erie, or into creeks or streams that flow into Lake Erie.

Steven M. Dettelbach, United States attorney for the Northern District of Ohio, said keeping our nation's waterways clean, especially Lake Erie, is an important priority.

"Lake Erie is the crown jewel of this region, both economically and environmentally," Dettelbach said. "Working

together, we can and will continue to do everything in our power to protect that asset for future generations of Ohioans."

Cervenik said the city has cooperated with the EPA throughout the agency's investigation and already has begun work on making the city's sewage system more eco-friendly.

"We've been proactive in this process," the mayor said. "We have already fixed or eliminated three or four combined sewer overflows already."

In addition to the construction and maintenance components of the settlement, the city must pay a \$150,000 civil penalty that will be split between the United States and state of Ohio. The settlement is subject to a 30-day public comment period and final court approval.

A copy of the consent decree and a summary of the agreement are available on the Justice Department website at http://www.justice.gov/enrd/Consent_Decrees.html.